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THE RED CROSS

IN CHARGE OF

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Director, Department of Nursing

"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN"

Without thought of self or personal glory, without regret, ungrudgingly, thousands of American nurses have offered their services to win the war and help "towards the peace that shall last." There have been many who were unable to give as freely as they wished; others who felt that their duty lay elsewhere, but more than 30,000 graduate nurses have said to the American Red Cross, "We are ready; use us!" have seen the star in the east and followed it, and, when necessary, have even made the supreme sacrifice.

"Why should I be willing to face less for my country than do our soldiers in France?" is the simple reply that rises superbly above the hardships, the drudgery, the mud, the rain, the frightfulness of war. There are more than 9000 such nurses in Europe to-day, who give freely of their skill, their womanliness, their very lives, with that same unconsciousness of self; as well as 12,000 in the cantonments, who have given service quite as important as that done in France. It is not a great step from the spirit of the soldier, home on furlough, who said, "Why should I talk of my exploits when there are a million men doing every day what I have done?" Perhaps it is Germany's total lack of a cause that is just, or the contrast between the Hun's war of pillage, rapine and murder, and our own crusading spirit, that has produced in our soldiers, in our nurses, and in our nation, a faith in the triumph of right that gives a meaning to Christmas, this year, that it has never had before. Self has been crucified and in its place has arisen service.

The months that America has been at war have been full to brimming with demands that had to be met, with calls that taxed the strength and resource of every individual in the country to the utmost. There has been no demand so imperative, no call so insistent as that which asked for nursing care and comfort for the sick and wounded Soldiers in France, for millions of men mobilized for the country's need in the cantonments throughout the United States, and for the 100,000,000 civilians here at home, subject both to the ordinary ills of peace time, and to the additional dangers of disease and accident due to the abnormal conditions under which we are living.

When this country entered the war in April, 1917, there were

8015 graduate nurses enrolled; in January, 1918, there were 16,215, or fifty per cent increase, and, at the present writing nearly 34,000 have enrolled with the Red Cross for service, in addition to hundreds of Home Defense nurses enrolled to meet local needs. It has meant something very real to the nurses of America, this banding together under a symbol that stands for the highest impulse of a nation, the will to labor unceasingly, unselfishly, in the cause of humanity, whatever the race, whatever the country, whatever the need.

In the epidemic of Spanish influenza that swept like a tidal wave of misery over the country, every woman who was able to help rallied at a single call around that symbol, and offered her best. With the receding of the wave, it is now possible to review what their service meant to the country at large. The "get together" feeling with which they have met the situation, unparalleled, perhaps, in all history, because it came at a time when our increasing casualty list in France had first claim on the nurses, was remarkable. The figures that make up the reports that are constantly coming in to Red Cross Headquarters from the Divisions through which the work is controlled, take on a warmth and meaning that will stay lighted as a tribute to the spirit of America that is helping to win the war.

In the Central Division, in the very beginning of the epidemic, 1000 nurses and student nurses were sent into military camps, while other nurses rallied to meet civilian needs.

At a few hours' notice, nurses packed their kits, boarded the trains and proceeded like soldiers to the camp. Old ones, young ones, Red Cross nurses and nurses who were not enrolled, nurses available for service later on, and nurses who would never be eligible for permanent service, all seemingly imbued with the spirit of the Red Cross and anxious only to serve in the highest and finest way

reads one report.

In some of the Divisions, the epidemic of Spanish influenza was accompanied by the appearance of other diseases and local disasters. In the Atlantic Division, the explosion at South Amboy was followed by an epidemic of diphtheria. In the Northern Division, forest fires added to the misery caused by the Spanish influenza epidemic and one report tells of 600 cases of the disease that broke out among the fire refugees.

"It was almost impossible to know ten hours ahead, how many nurses were available. They became ill over night, or their families died, or the town developed cases," was another difficulty that did not simplify conditions.

The story of the epidemic would not be complete without a personal tribute to the splendid work accomplished by the Division

Directors of Nursing and their staffs, who worked tirelessly day and night to organize and supervise the nursing personnel, not only for the emergency needs of the cantonment hospitals, but to aid in caring for the stricken civilian population. The same devotion permeated the entire staff at Red Cross Headquarters and practically all of the nurses connected with the office who were doing important executive work connected with the enrollment and assignment of nurses during the day, volunteered for the nursing care of the sick during their time off duty, giving themselves in many instances only a few hours' sleep out of the twenty-four. A number of the office staff, other than nurses, also volunteered for service as nurses' aides, and our only difficulty was to ensure sufficient rest and sleep to prevent a breakdown of office machinery.

Hundreds of the nurses succumbed to the disease, due perhaps to the unusual demands that have been made during the past year upon nurses throughout the country. That the danger of infection, which nothing seemed able to prevent, did not stop them from offering their services, is worthy of the highest praise.

The development of the epidemic in the coal fields of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, after the disease had run its course in other parts of the country, did not result in our asking in vain for assistance. The spirit of "We're in it, 'till it's over!" that seemed to pervade the entire country, echoed in the response of the nurses who had labored tirelessly in their own districts and now have given ungrudgingly elsewhere. They have "packed up their kits" again and have gone as gallantly into the coal fields as into the camps.

In France, where war has taken a turn not totally unexpected, there has been no cessation of effort, rather the opposite. There are not enough nurses over there to care for our sick and wounded, even with each nurse doing the work of two, and the need will not soon be lessened because the actual fighting has ceased.

"I am proud," writes the head nurse of one group of nurses in France, "of the spirit of devotion among the nurses. They are entirely unselfish, and will do anything, give anything, suffer anything, to have a chance to help those brave boys who are daily suffering, and giving their lives for the cause of liberty, and the nurses will not stop while the need exists."

The prospect of peace does not relieve the country or the nurses of the responsibility for the care of our boys still under arms. Whether they participate in actual warfare, or in the reconstruction work that will necessarily follow war, there is yet much work for the nurses of America to do. The cessation of hostilities will make no immediate change in the plans of the Red Cross. The need for nurses

is almost as great as it was before the possibility of peace loomed into view, and there dare not be a moment's pause, while one American boy is under arms.

There are more than two million American soldiers in France to-day; there are few more than 9000 American nurses serving overseas, over 700 of whom are serving with the British Expeditionary Forces. As long as there are American soldiers on French (or German) soil, there must be nurses to care for them. With the opening up of invaded territory, with the rehabilitation of ruined Belgium, France, and Russia, there will come a new need, one that will make its own appeal for nurses. The American spirit that helped to free the world from Prussianism will also be needed to help light the hearth fires of France. The call will come to the Red Cross nurse and because she has had her baptism of fire, and knows the glory of real service, she will not fail to respond.

SERVICES RENDERED BY NAVY NURSES

Reported by Colonel ——— of Engineers, Commanding Troops on Board

"The troops on board this ship are about to complete a journey which was fraught with many dangers, not the least of which was a very serious epidemic of what appears to be Spanish influenza. The sick report of the troops on board, which consist principally of my own regiment, the — Engineers, jumped from six to one hundred and sixty, inside of forty-eight hours. The Chief Nurse and her co-workers did not need any request, but seeing the danger, came forward and volunteered their services, with the result that what was a chaos (there being practically no accommodations or facilities on board to care for such numbers) was handled in what I consider a most admirable manner under the circumstances. They have worked night and day in the cold and damp, on decks that were being washed by seas, without any lights whatever, exposed to the dangers of contagion with a deadly malady, and they have rendered these services most cheerfully.

"The troops of this command can never forget the great assistance and the self-sacrifice which this noble body of women have rendered. That it was dangerous is shown by the serious illness, at the present writing, of Miss Briggs, who was only this morning cheering the distressed and sick soldiers with the work of her hands and the cheer of her smile.

"For my part, I have attempted to express to the Chief Nurse in my own feeble way the high appreciation of their valued assistance, but may I ask in addition that you kindly take such steps as may be within your power to see that suitable record be entered as to the most efficient services rendered in this emergency."